DOCUMENT NO.
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S (C) 1991
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 27 JAN 84 REVIEWER: 018557

Approved For Release 2000/09/11 : CIA-RDP79S01011A001000010033-2

9 March 1953

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SE-39: Elevation of Malenkov to leadership

(New Staff Draft for Consideration by the Board of National Estimates)

I The Initial Transfer of Authority

1. The problem of transfer of authority from Stalin is one of the most difficult which the Soviet system could face. The rapidity & precision with which the initial transfer of authority ~~government head~~ by Malenkov has apparently been effected represents an important achievement for the Soviet system. The smoothness of the transfer suggests that arrangements had been completed, or at least outlined, in advance and that Malenkov had been granted ~~[redacted]~~ by Stalin, or was in position to acquire, effective control over the Soviet Communist Party, the government, and the security & armed forces.

2. It is difficult to estimate with accuracy & confidence the ~~long term~~ effect of the apparently successful completion of at least the initial transfer upon

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~~ages of transfer will have. The problems involved in the transfer of authority~~ however, while this apparently successful transfer does not eliminate the possibility of discord and even of open conflict it almost certainly reduces seriously the likelihood that an ultimate struggle for power within the Soviet hierarchy will jeopardize Communist control over the USSR:

a. The clear and quick transfer of authority will probably help convince any potential rivals of Malenkov to support the new leader, if only for their own safety. There will probably be fewer rivals and fewer intrigues because of the apparently certain establishment of control in the hands of Malenkov.

b. Malenkov, as head of the Party, almost certainly has firm control over the security + armed forces. ~~Open discord~~ leading to open conflict is not likely during a time

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~~of uncertainty, there a simple contest, or civil~~ ~~contestes that and can call upon potentially superior armed forces.~~ ~~Since~~ Therefore, no opposition to the regime can or will have effective armed support ~~as~~ there will ~~be~~ almost certainly be no armed opposition.

c. Successful transfer of authority at the center and at the top of a highly centralized system simplifies and even ensures the transfer in the lower echelons of all the hierarchies throughout the entire country. Therefore, Malenkov will ~~probably~~ presumably have little or no difficulty in establishing his authority over the entire USSR.

d. Successful transfer of authority reduces, but does not eliminate, the likelihood of major and irreconcilable differences over policy. Communist discipline and fear of foreign attack would probably

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prevent any discord over policy from developing to the point of open conflict, at least during the first few months. After that period, if Malenkov succeeds in consolidating his power and attaining unchallenged control, the likelihood of serious conflicts over policy will probably decline.

~~In Analysis of the new organization Malenkov's position and the~~

3. Malenkov's key position in the Soviet Communist Party throughout the past fourteen years, his conspicuous & apparently planned elevation since 1949, his prominent role at and since the 19th Party Congress, and the apparent ease with which the initial accession to power has been achieved suggest that there will be no immediate challenge to his authority. However, we cannot estimate whether he has the qualities necessary to consolidate his position & to attain unchallenged power, since he has always operated with the backing of Stalin. ~~Neither is it possible to estimate with confidence the capabilities or probable courses of action of his possible opponents.~~

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4. A struggle for power could develop within the Soviet hierarchy at any time. Given the nature of the Soviet state, such a struggle would probably be restricted to the higher echelons of the Soviet Communist Party. In any case, the peoples of the USSR are unlikely to participate actively in the struggle, and the hold of the Communist Party over the USSR is not likely to be shaken.

5. It is impossible to estimate with confidence the significance of the "anti-Zionist" campaign of recent months or to determine the connection between recent developments in that campaign, particularly the so-called "doctors' plot," and the establishment of the new government. ~~It appears that~~ the "anti-Zionist" campaign apparently represents an ~~appeal~~ appeal to traditional Russian anti-Semitism as a party the general campaign to intensify the security drive, to promote russification, and to strengthen the regime's popular support.

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It may be significant that some of the leading doctors were Jews. In any case, the "doctors' plot" ~~had the advantage~~ does strengthen ~~attitude to~~ Malenkov's position, because it clears him of suspicion in the death of Zhdanov, who was Malenkov's chief rival at the time he died in ~~August~~, the summer of 1948.

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6. The outstanding features of the new Soviet organization of power thus far appear to be the concentration of power under Malenkov's leadership in virtually the former Politburo and the consolidation of the fusion between the Party and State. The Malenkov reorganization has revealed the existence of a Bureau attached to the Presidium of the Party Central Committee. This disclosure reveals the almost complete continuity of persons and responsibilities from the former Politburo to the present Presidium. The key men in the new Presidium, in addition to Malenkov, are, in the order listed: Beriya, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan. Saburov and Pervukhin, two experienced administrators and economic specialists in their fields, have been raised to the status of full membership in the Presidium. No important former members of the Party hierarchy have been dropped. In the Council of Ministers, the most important

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organ of the State apparatus, power has been concentrated, under Malenkov's chairmanship, in the hands of four First Deputy Chairmen: Beriya, Molotov, Bulganin, and Kaganovich. This group is exactly the same as ~~highly centralized~~ configuration of power over ~~Party, State security, foreign policy, military forces, and the economy~~ is essentially identical ~~the structure of~~ the wartime Committee of State Defense under Stalin, except that Mikoyan is not now a member. The consolidation of the fusion of Party and State is additionally indicated by the fact that all but one member of the Presidium have high posts as heads of important ministries. An attendant, though not unimportant, aspect of Malenkov reorganization is the clear demonstration of internal power, unity, and resolution.

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I

7. B. Under the Malenkov reorganization, policy-making power is ~~distributed along~~ highly centralized and, ~~hence, inevitably~~ ~~personalized lines and~~ apparently ~~growing~~ follows the de facto pattern which existed under Stalin. Malenkov, apparently now holds the same commanding heights within the Presidium and Secretariat of the Party and in the Council of Ministers that Stalin held, and [under him] direct authority over all ranks of the Party, security, military, and economic apparatuses has been consolidated in the new Presidium. 8. Our analysis of the ~~hierarchical~~ distribution of authority in the Council of Ministers strengthens the impression, formed after the 19th Congress, that active conduct of policy in the USSR has been passing since the war into the hands of men of long administrative and Party experience in their fifties, backed by administrators of substantial experience in their forties. It is significant that the Presidium, the most important Soviet policy-making organ,

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has an average age of 56, ~~hardly a sign of arteriosclerosis in the apparatus of power.~~

a. Party ~~Within the Party~~ the reconstruction of the Party Presidium from its original size of twenty-five full members and eleven alternates to ten full members and four alternates probably makes organizationally correspond closely with ~~with its~~ actual operation. The presence of five new ~~faces~~ on the highest level of this policy-making body, [Saburov, Pervukhin, Ponomarenko, Melnikov, and Bagirov] represents public recognition for achievement and probably provides considerable incentive for ambitious Soviet bureaucrats.

The Party Secretariat, the locus of ~~the decisive appointive and screening~~ power throughout the Soviet regime, has been streamlined under Malenkov's leadership. The membership has been reshuffled, with addition of three new members, including the administrative head of the MGB, and with the shifting of four members to duties in the government. Presidium member

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Khrushchev, who has been in the Politburo since 1939, appears to have assigned the role of administrative supervision over the Secretariat.

b. Security Forces. The merger of the MVD and MGB into the MVD follows the pre-war and war time pattern of organization. Beriya's appointment as Minister probably formalizes the previous arrangements. ~~in all likelihood constitutes the formalization of an already existing arrangement.~~ In view of the turnover of high administrative personnel in the security forces during the past two years and of the apparent representation of Party functionaries in these organs, ~~(particularly)~~ it is unlikely that ~~a immediate~~ threat to Malenkov and the Party's authority will develop from the security forces.

c. Military Forces. The transfer of the aged Marshal Voroshilov to the ceremonial post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, the fictitious legislative body, and the appointment of

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Marshal Bulganin as Minister of War probably ~~represents~~ activities of the ~~a continuation of the already established~~ does not represent any significant change in the structure of military control. Bulganin's long experience as a political functionary apparently ensures Party control over the military. The ~~key~~ appointments of Marshals Vasilevsky and Zhukov, outstanding wartime heros, as First Deputy Ministers of War was probably designed to secure a base of popular support for the Malenkov regime. ~~and provide a link for the military~~

d. Economy The appointment of Kaganovich to a post comparable to that which he held in the Committee of State Defense during World War II probably ensures the continuation of high-level control over the national economy. The appointment of Saburov ~~(43 yrs)~~, Pervukhin ~~(49 yrs)~~, Malyshev ~~(54 yrs)~~, and Kosygin, about whom little is known, to important posts in the economy provides clear evidence of

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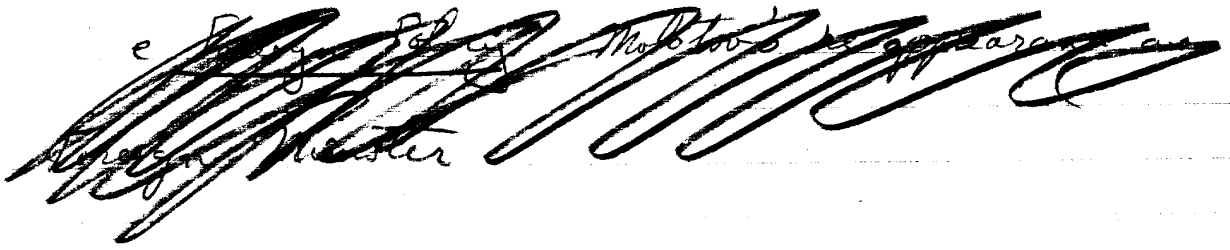
the transfer of real power within the Party from the professional revolutionaries to the carefully selected and trained managerial elite.



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III. Probable Consequences of Death of Stalin

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IV. Probable Future Soviet Policies

9. In the near future, the new Soviet leadership

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will almost certainly attempt to follow the foreign and domestic policies established during recent years. It will probably not believe it necessary or expedient to revise the emphases placed upon unremitting hostility to the West, upon enlarging the Bloc economic base, and upon increasing Bloc military power.

10. The death of Stalin removes an autocrat who, while ruthless and determined to spread Soviet power, did not allow his ambitions to lead him into reckless courses of action in his foreign policy. It would be unsafe to assume that the new Soviet regime will have Stalin's skill in avoiding a direct collision with the West. It will also lack his freedom of action and his ability to manoeuvre, since it will not possess Stalin's immense prestige and authority. Specifically, in foreign policy, the new regime will probably find it more difficult to abandon positions than did Stalin. Thus, it might even precipitate global

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war if it suspected that the West were about to seize Albania.

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11. The new Soviet regime almost certainly has a genuine fear that the West will launch an attack while it is in the process of consolidating its power. It will view with extreme suspicion any moves made by the West, particularly those involving long-range air forces or military forces close to the Bloc frontiers. It may adopt policies which appear reckless and even aggressive to the West.

On the other hand, once the new regime has consolidated its authority and attained unchallenged control over the USSR, it may be

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new Soviet leadership will have Stalin's skill in avoiding

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a direct collision with the West. It will also lack his freedom of action & his ability to manoeuvre, since it will not possess Stalin's immense prestige & authority. Specifically, in foreign policy, the new regime will probably find it more difficult to abandon positions than did Stalin. Thus, it might even precipitate global war as a suspected Western effort to seize Albania.

12. If the West should suggest re-examination of the principle issues which have divided East & West, the new Soviet government will probably reiterate its established policies. However, the new government will

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almost certainly show less confidence & skill in facing a new issue or in handling a Western proposal, whether dramatic or discreet, never before made. The Soviet government, deprived of Stalin's guidance, lacking an established policy & deprived of Stalin's guidance, the new government might blunder in such a way as to [illegible] support in the countries forming the Western coalition and in [illegible] even lose the initiative in political warfare.

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B. Effect upon the Russian regime

13 The death of Stalin removes not only the

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dictator of the USSR, but also the symbol of authority who bore the mantle of the ~~great~~ little father" for most Russians, even those strongly opposed to the Soviet system. Stalin was the man of steel who ~~had~~ raised Russia to industrial and military power, who ~~had~~ initiated the German attack, and who led the peoples of the USSR to the greatest military victory in Russian history. Moreover, Stalin as the universal genius and the benevolent despot was held responsible by most Soviet citizens for the evils of the Soviet system. It will be difficult for the Soviet people to recover from the psychological shock of his death, and ~~it will require at least several years before his position in the Soviet system will be filled.~~ will the new Soviet leadership will require at least several years before it can fill the vacuum he has left.

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C. Effect upon the Bloc & the international Communist movement

B. [illegible] for some time, no successor to Stalin will be able to achieve comparable status or similar significance as a symbol of the international Communist movement and as the undisputed leader of world Communism. [illegible]

Therefore, at least temporarily, the cohesion of the world Communist movement will probably be impaired. If there should be a struggle for power within the Soviet Communist Party, this struggle would almost certainly spread to the Communist Parties outside the Bloc.

15. B. Kremlin control over the Satellites is so firm that we do not believe it will be impaired by the death of Stalin. However, in the unlikely event that a struggle in the Soviet Communist Party should spread to the Soviet Army and the Soviet Security forces, Soviet control over the Satellites would almost certainly be shaken.

16. B. Relations between Tito and Moscow are unlikely to change as a result of the death of Stalin. The antagonism was not purely personal, but arose from a genuine clash of Yugoslav national interests with the Soviet Communist Party. Moreover, both sides have taken action and adopted positions which would be extremely difficult to reverse. The Kremlin could not recognize Tito as an independent Communist ally without undermining its position in the European Satellites.

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17. Tito's prestige and influence with fellow-travellers, particularly in Western Europe, may expand with the death of Stalin. We do not believe that Tito's influence within the Satellites will increase, unless there should be a prolonged struggle for power in the USSR.

18. We believe that Stalin's death will have no immediate effect upon Sino-Soviet cooperation or upon Chinese Communist foreign policies. However, no successor to Stalin will have prestige and authority in Asia comparable to his. The stature of Mao as leader and theoretician of Asiatic Communism will inevitably increase with the disappearance of the former supreme leader. Mao will almost certainly claim more influence in the determination of Bloc policy affecting Asia, but he will not seek or obtain leadership of the international Communist movement. ~~The new Moscow leadership will probably~~ deal cautiously with Mao; if it does not, ~~serious strains in Sino-Soviet relations will almost certainly~~ develop. ~~However,~~ the new Soviet government may ~~believe~~ Mao's stature in Asian Communist movement + an increase in Mao's influence in determining Bloc policy affecting Asia. The new Soviet regime may, therefore, place increasing emphasis upon developing Chinese economic + military strength in the Manchuria-Korea area, with an aim to increasing Sov influence.

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14. The new Moscow leadership will probably deal cautiously with Mao; if it does not, serious strains in Sino-Soviet relations will almost certainly develop. However, the new Soviet government may fear an increase in Mao's stature in the Asian Communist movement and in his influence in determining Bloc policy affecting Asia. It may, therefore, devote more attention to the Far East. It may also increase its efforts to develop Chinese economic and military strength, especially in Manchuria, with the aim of thereby increasing Soviet influence in Communist China.

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IV Probable Western Reaction to Death of Stalin and Election of Malenkov

We believe that in general the Western European

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leaders will now be disposed to conduct the East-West struggle with greater hesitancy and caution. They probably believe that the danger of war has been increased by the death of Stalin, and this fear may grow if the authority of the new Soviet regime is quickly consolidated. They will probably fear that any Western pressure on the Bloc would increase the danger of war and facilitate the stabilization of authority in the USSR. They will also probably hope that, if Western pressure is not exerted, the long-term problems involved in the transfer of authority in the USSR will bring about at least a temporary relaxation of tensions and enable them to postpone disagreeable policy decisions. However, they may ~~at the same time~~, ultimately come to resent any US failure to seize the ~~attempt to~~ initiative during this time of crisis to relax the tensions which now exist in relations between East and West.

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and in attaining unchallenged power in the USSR and if Bloc economic and military power continue to grow, undisturbed by this crisis, the peoples and the leaders of the West may undergo a severe psychological shock. The West has so long hoped that the Soviet system would totter or even be shattered by its inability to solve the immense problems involved in the transfer of power that Western morale might be severely shaken by Soviet survival of this major test. In some segments of world opinion, successful Soviet transition of this crisis and continued growth of Bloc power might seem a demonstration of invincibility by this new "wave of the future."

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